

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 00434 202108Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 EB-07 COME-00 AGR-05 TRSE-00

STR-04 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ARAE-00 (ISO) W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6424

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

PANCANAL

USSOUTHCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0434

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EAGR, PN

SUBJECT: REPORT ON CHIRIQUI JANUARY 15 MEETING; CATTLEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION REP DROPPED FROM DELEGATION FOR WASHINGTON VISIT

REF: A) PANAMA 303; B) PANAMA 376

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PANAMA CITY CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE, WHO ATTENDED JANUARY 15 SESSION OF COMITE CIVICO
DEMOCRATICO IN DAVID, REPORTS MEETING PROCEEDED WITHOUT
INTERFERENCE, WAS WELL ATTENDED, AND HEARD VARIOUS SPEAKERS
LAMENT DRIFT OF GOP TO LEFT AND ITS INTRUSION INTO PRIVATE
ECONOMY. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIA-
TION HAS BEEN DROPPED FROM DELEGATION VISITING WASHINGTON
THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS VOLUNTARY QUOTA FOR IMPORTS OF PANAMANIAN
MEAT BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION OF ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE
IN DAVID MEETING. END SUMMARY

2. LIC. AURELIO BARRIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LOCAL CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE, INFORMED EMBOFF THAT JANUARY 15 MEETING OF
COMITE CIVICO DEMOCRATICO PRO MEJORAMIENTO DE PANAMA,
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 00434 202108Z

WHICH HE ATTENDED AS PART OF REPRESENTATION SENT BY

CHAMBER, WENT OFF WITHOUT INCIDENT, WITH SOME 800 PEOPLE ATTENDING, INCLUDING WELL-KNOWN REPRESENTATIVES FROM AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL CIRCLES IN CHIRIQUI. (ANOTHER EYE-WITNESS REPORTED THAT PARTICIPANTS WERE PRIMARILY SMALL RICE GROWERS, WITH NUMBER OF CATTLEMEN ALSO PRESENT.) HE REPORTED THAT NUMBER OF SPEAKERS VOICED CONCERN ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S "DRIFT TO THE LEFT," ITS INTRUSION INTO AREAS FORMERLY RESERVED FOR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, AND NOTED POTENTIAL FOR INDOCTRINATION OF CHILDREN PRESENTED BY EDUCATIONAL REFORM LEGISLATION. HE DID NOT RECALL ANY EXTENSIVE REFERENCE TO GENERAL TORRIJOS CUBAN VISIT. HE SAID GROUP REPRESENTATIVE OF COMITE PLANNED TO CONTINUE TO SEEK OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ITS CONCERNS WITH LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION AND THAT ANOTHER MEETING OF COMITE WAS SET FOR END OF MONTH, PROBABLY JANUARY 30.

3. BRIEF ARTICLE ON PAGE 13 OF PRO-GOP "CRITICA" FOR JANUARY 20 REPORTS ON VISIT TO CHIRIQUI LAST WEEK BY AGRICULTURE MINISTER PARADES. INCLUDED IS STATEMENT THAT PAREDES TURNED DOWN INVITATION TO ATTEND MEETING OF "COMITE CIVICO" JANUARY 15 BECAUSE IT APPEARED THAT PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS OTHER THAN THAT INDICATED TO HIM AND THAT AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRESENT TO HIM PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION HAD ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED.

4. OFFICE OF VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE GONZALEZ HAS CONFIRMED TO US THAT RAFAEL ZUBIETA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, WILL NOT BE ACCOMPANYING GONZALEZ ON VISIT TO WASHINGTON THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS PANAMA'S VOLUNTARY MEAT QUOTA (PANAMA 391) AND THAT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION MEMBER ERNESTO PEREZ BALLADARES HAS BEEN ADDED TO GROUP. ZUBIETA INFORMED US HE WAS TOLD HE WAS DROPPED BECAUSE OF CRITICAL REMARKS DIRECTED AT GOP BY PRESIDENT OF CHIRIQUI CHAPTER OF ASSOCIATION AT JANUARY 15 MEETING (ZUBIETA DID NOT HIMSELF ATTEND).

5. DEVELOPMENTS DESCRIBED ABOVE OVERTAKEN BY ARREST JANUARY 20 OF PROMINENT MEMBERS OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN APPARENT REACTION TO OPEN CRITICISMS OF GOP (SEPARATE REPORT FOLLOWS).

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 00434 202108Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, FARM BLOCS, MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PANAMA00434
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760021-0735
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760139/aaaabidh.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 PANAMA 303, 76 PANAMA 376
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <25 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPORT ON CHIRIQUI JANUARY 15 MEETING; CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION REP DROPPED FROM DELEGATION FOR WASHINGTON VISIT
TAGS: PINT, EAGR, PN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006